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Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Statement submitted by Peace Boat, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* E/2004/100.

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Northeast Asia

Regional Consultation Meeting
Following an East Asian Consultation Meeting in October 2003, it was agreed that the Northeast Asian and Southeast Asian regions would proceed independently due to the markedly different nature of potential conflicts (in North East Asia, this reflects the existing post-Cold War structure), as well as the disparate level of development and activity of civil society. The urgency of the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula and the threat of remilitarization in Japan are further important factors for the Northeast Asian region to have a separate process.

At the first Northeast Asian Consultation Meeting in Tokyo from 6 - 8 February, 2004, 15 members from CSOs in China, Hong Kong SAR of China, Taiwan Province of China, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Japan attended. Dr. Hanifa Mezoui, Chief of UN Non-Governmental Organizations Section, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, was also present at the Tokyo meeting and emphasized ways in which CSOs can achieve greater effectiveness in their relations with UN and governments.

Given the tense political climate in the region - especially the daily escalating tensions between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan in the context of the wider Korean peninsula crisis - all participants acknowledged the strong significance and value of meeting together. Civil society in Northeast Asia is relatively weak and post Cold War structures and strong political factors have further inhibited the growth of an active regional network. For Northeast Asia, the strengthening of a civil society network will be a means in itself to promote conflict prevention. There is an urgent need to enhance participation by the international conflict prevention community to seriously address the threat of armed conflict in Northeast Asia.

Structure
In Northeast Asia, Peace Boat and Asian Peace Alliance (APA) were nominated to be the co-initiators in the region. The Regional Steering Group comprises two representatives each from Hong Kong, SAR of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan Province of China, and the Russian Federation, with three representatives from China. Representatives from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Mongolia are still being sought.

The CSOs represented in the Regional Steering Group are, Women Making Peace; the International Movement Against Discrimination and Racism (IMADR); the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union; International Research Center of the Maritime State University in Vladivostok; Nonviolent Peaceforce Japan; Peace Time Foundation of Taiwan; Asian Peace Alliance; Taiwan Security Research Center, National Taiwan University;" Nanjing Peace Institute,* Pacific Wave.* (* = awaiting confirmation)

Key Regional Issues
Potential conflict situations identified to be of critical importance in the region are:

- Crisis of the Korean peninsula
- China-Taiwan Province of China cross-straits issue
- Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution under threat and the risk of Japanese
- Kuril Islands / Northern Territories dispute between Japan and the Russian Federation remilitarization
- Dispatch of troops to Iraq by Japan and the Republic of Korea
- Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands dispute between Japan and China

Also considered significant are the broader challenges of development and human security, and the need to work towards historical understanding and reconciliation with regard to events and war crimes during Japan's period of imperialist aggression.
Given the urgency of the Korean peninsula nuclear crisis, the importance of active participation by civil society in the Republic of Korea was recognized by all parties, and therefore the national process in the Republic of Korea will decide by the end of February whether or not a Seoul-based organization will share the role of Co-Initiator with Peace Boat and APA.

National process
As of February 2004, the Republic of Korea was the only country to have already initiated its national process. The Seoul focal point held two national meetings in December 2003, with 15 participating organizations.

Action Agenda
Recognizing that civil society is relatively weak in the region, the most immediate regional plan is to focus on outreach amongst CSOs in the region, especially in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia and China. Concrete plans for immediate advocacy and cooperative action were agreed on: 1) Sending an Open Letter to the heads of states involved in the Six-Nation talks on the Korean peninsula nuclear weapons crisis; 2) International Student programme for Northeast Asia onboard Peace Boat; 3) Speaking Tours to neighboring countries in Northeast Asia by members of CSOs. 4) Advocacy regarding Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan (renunciation of war clause) as an effective non-violent conflict prevention mechanism of regional significance. Cooperative work and research will be an important component of outreach for the GPPAC process in the region. Plans for a Co-Initiators Meeting have been made provisionally for April, with a Steering Committee Meeting scheduled for July. The Regional Conference is tentatively planned for November/December 2004.

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